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ABSTRACT

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Research Series No. 211

THE INFLUENCE OF CLASSROOM DISCOURSE ON STUDENT TEXTS: THE CASE OF ELLA

Sarah J. McCarthey

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Abstract

Using a social constructivist theoretical framework, the case of Ella demonstrates how one fifth-grade, African-American student who participated in a writing process classroom appropriated the dialogue from social interaction and transformed it to use in her own texts and in her talk with others. During the teacher-student writing conferences, Ella and the teacher were able to establish a shared understanding of the classroom assignment. These conferences were pivotal in Ella's subsequent texts because she drew upon these conversations in her revisions. Yet, Ella did not just accept or imitate what she thought the teacher valued, but transformed her understanding to use in new ways in her text. Ella was skillful at understanding the classroom norms and the teacher's expectations, negotiating the teacher's values while developing her own voice. This case demonstrates the importance of teachers and students developing a shared understanding of the task as well as the importance of students' previous experiences with texts.

The Influence of Classroom Discourse on Student Texts: The Case of Ella[1]

Sarah J. McCarthey[2]

Theoretical Framework

A shift in the dominant theory and practice of writing instruction, from a focus on the written product and form of writing towards a process approach to writing, reflects the increased attention given to the social context in which learning occurs and the role of language in developing literacy (Flower, 1989; Freedman, Dyson, Flower, & Chafe, 1987). Current school practices that lie at the heart of the process approach to writing are whole group discussions about literature (Calkins, 1986) and teacher-student writing conferences and peer-response groups in which the teacher and an individual student or peers discuss a student's text (DiPardo & Freedman, 1988). Both researchers and practitioners have suggested that the dialogue that takes place between the teacher and student and among other students may be central to helping students become critical readers and monitors of their own strategies during writing (Calkins, 1986; Daiute, 1985).

Understanding the role of dialogue in learning to write requires a theoretical framework that delineates the relationship between dialogue and learning. A social constructivist perspective of learning and development (e.g., Cole, 1985; Rogoff, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wertsch, 1985) views dialogue within social contexts as central to learning. This view provides a theoretical framework to examine the role that dialogue plays as students develop as writers within the contexts of their classrooms.

The social constructivist perspective consists of several key features: (a) knowledge and knowing originate in social interaction (Bruffee, 1984; Harré, 1984; Mead, 1934; Wittgenstein, 1953); (b) learning proceeds from the interpsychological plane

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[1]This paper was presented at the National Reading Conference in Palm Springs, California, in December 1991, for which McCarthey won the NCR's Outstanding Student Achievement Award. This paper will be published in the NCR's yearbook.

[2]Sarah J. McCarthey, a former research assistant with the Institute for Research on Teaching and the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning, is an assistant professor of language and literature in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Texas at Austin.

(between individuals) to the intrapsychological (within an individual) plane with the assistance of knowledgeable members of the culture (Rogoff, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976); and (c) language mediates experience, transforming mental functions (Leont'ev, 1981; Vygotsky, 1986; Wertsch, 1985). Transformation of mental processes occurs as the external, social plane is internalized and children reorganize and reconstruct their social experiences into individual, psychological processes (Leont'ev, 1981; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1980). The internal reconstruction of external operations is referred to as *internalization*.

Harré (1984) described four phases of the internalization process that proceed cyclically from the social to the individual and back to the social. The four phases include (a) appropriation, in which the individual participates in social practices; (b) transformation, in which the individual takes control over the social appropriations; (c) publication, in which the transformation again becomes public; and (d) conventionalization, in which the transformation reintegrates into the social practices. This internalization of social experiences highlights two key features of Vygotsky's (1978, 1986) developmental theory--the role of the knowledgeable other and the role of dialogue.

Because learning occurs as the result of the individual's interactions with others, the role of the knowledgeable member of the culture is vital to facilitating learning. Initially, children cannot function independently on tasks but need the assistance of an adult or more capable peer through a process called scaffolding (Applebee & Langer, 1983; Cazden, 1983; Rogoff, 1986; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). An essential means through which a knowledgeable member of the culture can scaffold instruction for a learner is through dialogue. The dialogue itself becomes the means through which the external, social plane is internalized to guide the child's own thinking (Cazden, 1983; Palincsar & Brown, 1989; Wertsch & Stone, 1985); the transformed dialogue is referred to as "inner speech" (Vygotsky, 1986). Bakhtin (1984, 1986; in Emerson, 1983), whose ideas parallel Vygotsky's, suggests that inner speech is modeled upon social discourse,

consisting of dialogues conducted with imagined audiences drawn from the many voices a person has encountered. Because learning is assumed to occur first on the interpsychological level, establishing communication is essential. Rommetveit (1979) suggests that through negotiation speakers create a "temporarily shared social reality" referred to as intersubjectivity.

The purpose of this study was to investigate one student's process of internalization of the dialogue that occurred during writing time, with attention to the teacher-student writing conference. Of particular interest was how the teacher and student established intersubjectivity and how that dialogue was reflected in the student's talk about her text and in the texts she produced. The study is important in contributing to our understanding of the role of dialogue in learning.

Methods

The methods of data collection and analysis for this study were consistent with assumptions from interpretive/qualitative traditions of research (Erickson, 1986). The methods also drew from Merriam's (1988) description of case studies, while analyses drew from sociolinguistic literature that suggests that interactions are governed by context-specific rules (Cazden, 1986; Florio-Ruane, 1987; Green, 1983; Hymes, 1972). This case study was part of a larger study that included four students.

Participants

One fifth/sixth-grade classroom in an ethnically diverse public elementary school in New York City was the focus of the study. The teacher, Ms. Meyer,[3] a female Caucasian, had participated in the Teachers College Writing Project (Calkins, 1986) and established a writing process classroom for several years. The four cases were selected by the teacher and researcher to demonstrate differences in internalization processes of students with various oral and written abilities and diverse ethnic backgrounds.

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[3] All names of the teacher, the school, and the students are pseudonyms.

The case presented here focuses on one student, Ella, selected for this paper because she illustrates an example of a student with fluent oral and written abilities who conformed to the classroom norms in some ways, but resisted in other ways, influencing how she used the classroom dialogue in her own texts and talk.

Classroom Context

During the five weeks of the study, students participated in a writing workshop in which they kept notebooks of their personal experiences and reflections. They then conferred with their teacher to select a topic from the notebook to be developed for a project to be shared with a larger audience. The focus of the class sessions, especially the minilessons (e.g., Calkins, 1986) was on providing examples of good writing and identifying those qualities for students to include in their own writing. Examples came from children's literature, the teacher's notebook, students' work from previous years, and students' own writing.

Data from interviews with the teacher as well as classroom observations of whole-class sessions and conferences with students suggests that Ms. Meyer had a particular idea of what constituted good writing. Four ideas were central: (a) personal experience produces the best topics for writing; (b) good texts use imagery and figurative language; (c) writing should be for a particular audience; and (d) a writer needs to focus and organize the text.

Ms. Meyer strongly believed that children should write about issues with which they are very familiar. This meant that children should write from personal experience and write true stories rather than fiction. This belief underlay Ms. Meyer's rationale for having students keep writers' notebooks. Ms. Meyer focused on two related features of language in her lessons and in her interactions with individual students: imagery and figurative language. Imagery consisted of including descriptive adjectives, adding detail to events and settings, and avoiding the use of common words such as "nice" and "good" for the

purposes of forming a picture in the reader's mind. Figurative language included any type of comparisons, especially similes and metaphors.

In almost every class session, the teacher and the students discussed the uses of language by authors and by student authors. The teacher did not refer to imagery or figurative language by these names, but used such expressions as "description," "beautiful language," "detail," and "comparisons." The teacher referred to "getting an image in mind" or "creating pictures for the reader." When reading literature to the students, Ms. Meyer pointed out particularly effective language. These examples tended to be filled with adjectives and details.

Sources of Data

The sources of data map onto the Harré (1984) model of internalization, with classroom observations intended to capture the appropriation phase, interviews documenting the transformation and publication phases, and student texts documenting conventionalization (see Figure 1).

Classroom observations. Classroom observations of activities during writing time were videotaped and audiotaped. The activities included (a) teacher-directed lessons in which the teacher and students discussed literature and qualities of good writing; (b) writing time in which the students worked on their individual texts; (c) teacher-student writing conferences in which the teacher discussed the students' texts with them; and (d) share sessions in which a student read a text to the whole class The observational data focused on Ella as she participated in classroom activities.

Teacher interviews. Teacher interviews provided data about the teacher's intentions and perceptions of the various writing activities. Questions focused on her goals for writing and her perceptions of Ella and the texts she had produced.

Student interviews. I conducted two different types of interviews with Ella--formal and informal. The two formal interviews consisted of an entry interview and an exit interview. Entry interview questions focused on Ella's background and previous

experiences with text, while the exit interview focused on issues relevant to the content and context of the classroom. These two interviews lasted about one hour each and took place outside of the classroom context. The five additional informal interviews consisted of three brief (five-minute) interviews within the classroom context, while the other two lasted about 35 minutes and took place in a separate room during lunch. Questions focused on the texts that Ella was writing, her perceptions of the classroom, and her understanding of the writing tasks in which she was engaged.

Student texts. The text represented of what Ella had internalized. All drafts that Ella had written since the beginning of the year from her notebooks and her project were collected and analyzed.

Procedures

Data were collected over a five-week period during the fall; this period was chosen because it provided data over the course of the development of a text through planning, drafting, and revising (Hayes & Flower, 1980). I conducted daily classroom observations and used a combination of the videotapes and fieldnotes to create detailed narratives of classroom interactions. I interviewed the teacher twice during data collection. Ella participated in interviews throughout data collection. All classroom observations and interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim.

Analysis

To develop the case of Ella, I triangulated the data, including the transcripts from the videotaped and audiotaped observations of classroom writing time, Ella's texts, and her interviews.

Classroom observations. First I selected Ella's writing conferences with the teacher and performed a systematic microanalysis, similar to Erickson's (1977) microethnography. Using an inductive approach, I segmented parts of the conferences into meaningful units, examining the individual turn of each speaker. These turns are numbered to provide the reader with a means to become oriented with the dialogue (see Table 1 for transcription

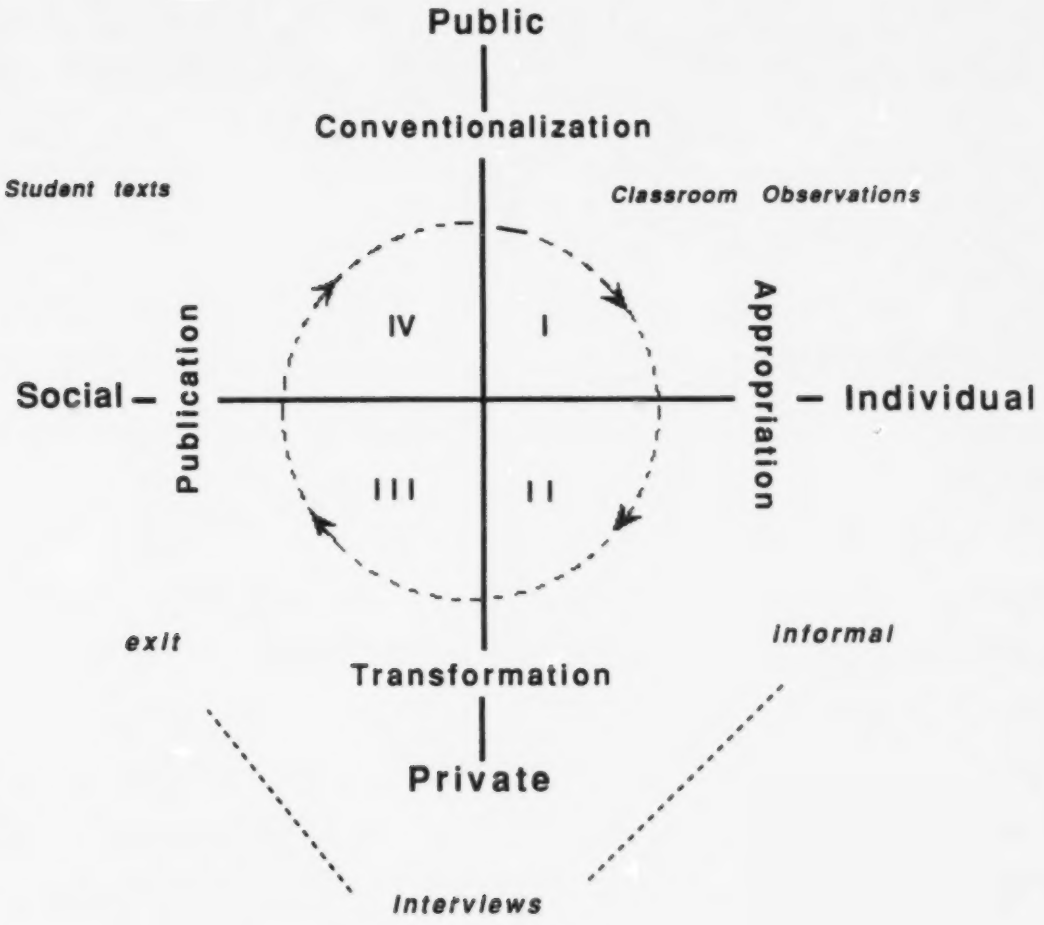

Figure 1. Data sources and Harré model.

Table 1
Key to Transcription Conventions

1.	number of turn in sequence of dialogue
/	short pause
//	longer pause
underline	marks emphatic stress
italics	marks more emphatic stress
CAPS	mark very emphatic stress
--	overlapping talk of speakers
?	marks question, rising intonation
[brackets]	are used for comments on pitch, amplitude, quality of speech
(parentheses)	used for comments about actions such as nods
(inaudible)	indicates transcription impossible

notations). Analysis of the two conferences focused on two key elements: content and conversational style. For instance, discussing audience and genre exemplified the content of what the teacher and Ella discussed. The second element of the analysis of conferences focused on how the teacher and student communicated. This analysis included: (a) body language and proxemic cues (Hall, 1966); (b) conversational moves by the teacher, such as directives, elicitations, and explanations (Willes, 1983); (c) prosodic cues, including pitch, stress, and speed (Gumperz, 1982); and (d) conversational moves by the student, including explanations, agreement, disagreement, and requests for information.

Teacher interviews. I analyzed all the interview data relevant to discussions about Ella, presenting passages that explicate the teacher-student relationship. Themes emerged from the data in which the teacher described her views of fiction writing and the purposes of notebook writing.

Student interviews. I developed the categories of background, views about writing, writing topics, and the teacher's view of the student for analyzing the entry interviews. I organized the exit interview around the themes central to the classroom discourse: use of personal experience, description and imagery, audience, and organization. I selected passages from the informal interviews to present as they related to specific aspects of the writing conferences or classroom interactions.

Student texts. I read all of the examples from Ella's classroom notebook and her fiction pieces that were kept in a separate notebook, categorizing the pieces according to genre and topic. For analysis of the texts from Ella's project, I used inductive categories that emerged from Ella's work and deductive categories developed from analyzing the teacher's image of an effective piece of writing such as use of personal experience, description and imagery, audience, and organization.

My analysis traced the absence or presence of features from the classroom dialogue through to Ella's talk about her texts and in the texts themselves.

The Case of Ella

Ella was a tall, African-American, fifth grader. She usually wore her hair tied neatly in a braid on top of her head. She wore wire-rimmed glasses and often sported colorful sweaters or interesting T-shirts, such as one with tie-dyed patterns. Ella loved to talk. She particularly liked to engage adults in conversation and would launch into lengthy stories about herself or humorous anecdotes of the world around her.

Ella described having an extended family consisting of her mother, father, sister, uncle, aunt, and grandparents. She lived with her mother in an apartment in a neighborhood in Spanish-Harlem. She took cabs to school, often accompanied by her mother. Her mother was a proofreader for a publishing company and Ella spoke of her mother and her mother's friends teaching her how to proofread texts. Ella's father, a teacher at NYU, lived in what Ella described as a fancy apartment about 14 blocks south of Ella's. Ella was uncertain what he taught, but commented that he taught people "how to run things," such as elevators. She saw him most weekends and spent time with her baby sister who lived with her father and his wife.

Ella had many opportunities to engage in literate activities at home. She read voraciously, frequently wrote stories on her own at home, and played on her father's computer. She thought she wanted to be a banker when she grew up, but her Uncle Val, a writer, had suggested to her, "'I want you to follow in my footsteps'" and she was taking this advice seriously. She read for at least forty-five minutes every night. Her compelling interest was Nancy Drew books or any type of mysteries; she wanted to read all 80 in the series. She read many other types of books, though, because her teacher did not approve of Nancy Drew books and required students to read literature from the classroom as well. Ella checked out from the classroom a piece of fiction about every two days. She had read several different versions of The Little Princess and was interested in comparing them because she saw "how the story changed with each version" and said that "different authors write different ways."

Views About Writing

Ella had been at this public school since kindergarten and had many opportunities to engage in writing process classrooms. In fourth grade she had been in a classroom, which she really loved, where she was allowed to write many stories. In response to whether she liked to write she said: "I like writing. I like writing. I don't know why I like writing detective stories so much but I just do."

When asked questions about writing, Ella almost always began to tell a story of something she had written. She believed that the one thing she had gained from Ms. Meyer's class was the importance of literature in supplying ideas for writing:

> I learned that you can use your best writing off of books. Books can give you some good ideas. . . . Like I got the ideas for the Catskills [piece]. The Catskills came from that book, When I Was Young in the Mountains.

When asked if she considered herself a good writer, Ella responded, "It depends on what kind of a story it is." Ella believed she was best at writing fiction, and thus, to continue her work on fiction, she kept a separate notebook.

Ella's Notebooks

Ella kept two notebooks--a small one for her classroom writings and a larger one for her fiction and what she called "humorous stories." She described the difference in notebooks in this way: "There's one that you usually use for stories and then there's one that you use for things that have happened in your life. Ms. Meyer says you are supposed to put everything in your notebook."

However, Ella did not put everything in her small, class notebook. Instead, she kept a secret, fiction notebook. This related to the fact that writing fiction was unsanctioned in the classroom. Ella shared with me the book she wrote in fourth grade, of which she was very proud. This was the book entitled Morris and Marsha, P. I. (the "I" is cleverly drawn in the form of an "eye"). Inside were three stories: "The Case of the Dog de Menson," "The Case of the Foggie Building," and "The Vanishing Castle." Each story

had several chapters, with the book totalling 32 pages. Her large notebook for fiction contained several fictional pieces, some with several chapters. This notebook also contained the story that she and her friend, Serena, had written together, much of it on the telephone.

Teacher's Views of Ella and Fiction Writing

Ms. Meyer felt positively towards Ella, but did not encourage her to write fiction. She described her as an excellent student who received ratings of "excellent" in every subject and scored in the 99th percentile on standardized achievement tests. She found that Ella had good ideas and seemed in control of school and of her writing. About Ella, Ms. Meyer said: "Ella is a really neat kid, she's a very, very neat kid, she really is. She's very much on top of the situation, she's a little flighty, you know, she's a little like disorganized and all over the place." Ms. Meyer found that Ella performed well in the classroom, got her work completed, and wrote some very good pieces. Ms. Meyer expressed her attitude toward Ella in this way:

> As far as her work is concerned, she really does fine. She pays attention in class, she's really a really neat kid, I really like her. I think her notebook is lovely. I mean I think it's honest and it's really lovely and you know there's a lot of really great things happening there. I think perhaps her project will really be very nice, you know she'll pull out those really nice pieces about her aunt and do some really nice writing about them.

While Ms. Meyer clearly approved of Ella's notebook pieces, she was less enthusiastic about Ella's or other students' fiction writing. She expressed her belief in the second interview that it is necessary to explicitly teach fiction writing:

> There's no way to model them, there's no way to get them to understand what qualities of good fiction are. They get out of hand so if you're going to let them do that, you have to study fiction first. You have to study how to develop a character; you have to study how to develop a setting; you have to teach them how to do that and then you have to model for them first good, short pieces of fiction, good short stories so that they understand how to structure a fiction piece.

Ms. Meyer's dislike of children writing fiction at this point in the year rested on her assumptions that the students were too unsophisticated to see that fiction writing was based on truth--the personal experience of authors. She believed that writers used notebooks to generate ideas for fiction, but that notebooks recorded events of writers' lives that could be used for development into stories. Ms. Meyer said:

> [Students] don't have an idea that it really is the same and that fiction writing should really be based on truth from their notebooks. In other words, nobody goes out, Katherine Paterson [an author of children's books], nobody goes out and writes a piece of fiction that isn't based on truth somehow or somewhere. You know what I mean, and if they did do fiction, it should really have come, should come from their notebooks at some point.

Ms. Meyer felt strongly that students should base their writing on research or the reality that they observe around them. Students have to write from their own experience because

> that's the way it has to be for young kids. Otherwise you get these stories about Ninja Turtles and that G.I. Joe is coming alive and about people living on the moon. It's not based in any kind of fact or any kind of research or any kind of reality. Whatever their story is about, they're not doing any research into the reality of the fiction, you know?

The previous examples from the teacher's interview provide background for understanding Ella's interactions with Ms. Meyer. The following discussion of Ella is organized around the Harré (1984) model of internalization.

Appropriation: Opportunities for Social Interaction

Ella often contributed to classroom discussions and shared what she had written with the whole class. The teacher tended to react positively to the pieces Ella shared. For instance, during one of the discussions of qualities of good writing, Ella read her piece on handicapped people. Ms. Meyer asked the class to come up with ideas about what made Ella's piece an example of good writing. Ms. Meyer herself responded that the piece had "voice," sounding as if a real and specific person read it. Ms. Meyer suggested to the class that the author's voice contributed to effective writing.

Writing Conferences

The first conference between Ms. Meyer and Ella occurred on October 30 within a small group conference held on the rug. Prior to the conference, Ella had written many pieces in her notebook, but had not yet decided upon a topic for the project. As the conference with Ella began, the teacher and student faced each other, sitting about four feet apart, while the three other students remained in their places. In the beginning of the dialogue, the teacher and Ella were trying to find a common ground for the topic of Ella's project. Ms. Meyer started off with several opening lines, trying to get a sense of where Ella was in terms of topic selection. Their conference began in this way:

1. T: Umm/ so what were you thinking/ Ella?//
2. Ella: I don't know/
3. T: Have you read through your notebook already?/
4. Ella: Yeah/
5. T: Mhmm// And nothing seems to stand out for you as being important?//
6. Ella: Not really/ [*little affect or intonation*]

Ella was at a loss for a response to the teacher's question about what may have been important to write about. For instance, the expression on her face was one of puzzlement. She responded to the teacher's questions, but offered little information on her own initiative. At this point, no shared sense of what was important to write about existed. From the teacher's point of view, what was important to write about was a personal subject that has some deeper meaning for the child's life. Ella, however, based on previous interviews, seemed to have a very different idea about what selecting something important meant. When asked before the conference what she was going to select for her project that was important, Ella responded:

> I don't know what I'm going to do . . . because, because there's no really big, important issues in here (indicating her notebook). Except for this, I wrote about the news. I was mad, though, because this guy was missing since

Sunday and they found him in the lake drowned and they didn't put it on the news or anything.

Ella may have been having difficulty responding to the teacher's questions because she was operating from the assumption that the teacher wanted her to select an item in her notebook that had dealt with a news event; that was her definition of important. However, when the teacher continued to probe and ask specific questions about what Ella had written, she was able to respond more fluently, with greater ease. The conference continued:

7.	T:	Mhmm/ Is there something you seem to write about more often than/ than not?//
8.	Ella:	Yeah/
9.	T:	What do you think that is?//
10.	Ella:	Ummm/ Well/ about ummm/ usually about me and when I was little//
11.	T:	Mhmm/ Mhmm/ Why do you think that you're writing a lot about when you were little?/ It's interesting when we do that when we/ when we write a lot about when we we're little and we're not little anymore/ Why do you think you're doing that?//
12.	Ella:	Because (inaudible) . . . I'm not really sure/
13.	T:	I'm I'm not hearing you sweetie/
14.	Ella:	My Aunt Delores really reminds me of that because I spent a lot of time with her/
15.	T:	Mhmm/
16.	Ella:	And//
17.	T:	You spend a lot of time with her now?/
18.	Ella:	Not anymore cause she lives in Virginia/

At this point, teacher and student seem to have found a common ground, beginning to establish some shared understanding. The teacher asked Ella several questions to lead her to talk more about her aunt. Ella seemed more eager to respond, adding why she did not spend time with her aunt now. The nonverbal language contributes to the

picture as well. Whereas Ella had looked puzzled in the previous sections, here she nodded her head on several occasions and then shook her head when the teacher asked her if she spent time with her aunt now.

In the next section, the teacher revisited the issue of trying to find what was important about Ella's relationship with her aunt. In this sequence of dialogue, the teacher suggested that Ella was missing her aunt and remembering the wonderful times. For the teacher, it appeared that this was what was important for the child to discover--what was important was the personal relationship the student had with the other person. The dialogue continued:

19. T: Okay/ So you so you are missing her/ is that what you're saying?//

20. Ella: Yeah/

21. T: Ahhh// So you're saying that the bottom of all this is that you're missing your Aunt Delores now and you're/ remembering all the wonderful times?//

22. Ella: (nods) And I'm mad at my grandparents because they're going to see her and they're not taking me/

23. T: So/ don't you think that/ what does that sound to you?/ that maybe this would be that/ that you you have all those stories about when you used to do things with her?// Well what about if you turned them into uh/ kind of a letter to her// That would be a really neat project a real neat letter to her where you/ went on and on and talked to her about all the wonderful times as a way to say to her I miss you so much// Maybe in a way to plan/ a time where you could get together?/ Yeah?/ Does that sound like something you might want to do?//

At this point, Ella had become engaged in the conversation about her aunt and seemed to have found this a satisfactory topic about which to write her project. The teacher suggested that she write a letter to her aunt and this seemed to strike Ella as a good idea, evidenced by her nodding of her head at several different points. The teacher emphasized several words such as "stories," "letter" and "miss" indicating these were the important ideas. In her recommendations to Ella, she also placed her inflection on "neat," giving the implicit message that writing a letter was a good idea. She couched her

recommendation in less directive words such as "might" and expressed her own enthusiasm about the topic.

In the next sequence, however, conflict emerged. At the mention of the word project, Ella suggested that she and her friend, Serena, were doing a project with me, the researcher. Here is how the conversation proceeded:

24.	Ella:	Yeah/ Plus I'll be doing a project for Sarah/ (laughs and turns toward camera) [*intonation becomes more animated*] This fiction project that me and Serena are doing// We're writing we're writing these two stories/ and we've been writing them for (laughs) quite a while now/
25.	T:	For Sarah?/ [*surprised tone*]
26.	Research:	I'm willing to listen to the stories she writes with Serena. I'm not really writing them with her--
27.	Ella:	She's going to read--
28.	T:	Oh/ Okay--
29.	Ella:	Umm/ well/ she's listening to us while we're writing them--
30.	T:	Um/ OK/ [*spoken quickly*]
31.	Ella:	(inaudible)--

At the point where Ella introduced the topic of writing another project for me, Ella looked directly at the camera which I was holding. Ella was somewhat animated as she smiled and gestured towards me. Ms. Meyer seemed very surprised, also looked at me, indicating she was trying to understand my role with the students. In an interview later that day, Ms. Meyer explained that she had thought I was encouraging students to write fiction, of which she disapproved.

Ms. Meyer's further interactions in the conference reflect her discomfort with Ella's writing a fictional piece, rather than a personal expressive piece. In the next phases of the conference, Ms. Meyer moved into a more directive mode after the brief interaction about the "other project" and became explicit about the procedures that Ella should go through to complete the letter to her aunt.

32. T: So/ umm/ you need to get started with that/ OK// So how do you think about that?/ You have a couple of those entries in your notebook?//

33. (Ella nods)

34. T: Okay so why don't you start/ take a folder/ okay// and on separate pieces/ stick some papers in your folder/ and start lifting out those entries about your aunt/ and start finding the ones that really are important/ about the times that were really important// And start writing them in such a way that you think that they would fit in perfectly// Okay?/ (Ella nods) And then you'll decide how to put it in to a letter form to her/ okay?// (Ella nods) That sounds like a nice project Serena/ uh Serena/ (laughs) Ella/

The conference ended with Ella getting up from the floor and going back to her seat where she began to select existing pieces from her notebook for her project.

Ella responded positively, if not enthusiastically, to her conference with the teacher. In an informal interview after the conference, Ella explained that she now felt that she understood what a project was. She said that the teacher had explained it to her. Ella summarized her interaction with the teacher by saying that she had told the teacher she had a lot of entries about her Aunt Dolores and that, the teacher, then recommended turning those entries into a letter to her aunt. When I asked Ella if the teacher's idea was a good one, she said, "I'm going to go ahead with it." In response to whether that were something she wanted to do, Ella responded, "Yeah. And she's [aunt Dolores] been begging me to write her a letter so it won't run up my grandparents' phone bill."

Looking back at the writing conference, we can understand Ella's interpretation of the events. Initially, Ella suggested that she had written several entries about her Aunt Dolores. Ms. Meyer picked up on this and encouraged Ella to write about this topic for her project. Ms. Meyer also suggested Ella turn these entries into a letter, which was satisfactory to her because she could meet the teacher's criterion of an appropriate topic while meeting her own interest in contacting her aunt without creating an expensive telephone bill.

The teacher and student had come to a shared understanding of what the project was. Even though Ella had temporarily gotten excited about writing a fiction project when she told the teacher I was listening to her and Serena, her interest waned when the teacher did not encourage her to write fiction for this project. Ella may have compromised her own interests to satisfy the teacher, but she did so in a way that allowed her to find a topic that she was interested in pursuing.

Ella's interest in the letter to her aunt developed over the next several days. She worked on her project, selecting work from her notebook and expanding upon those entries. On November 8, Ms. Meyer conducted a second writing conference with Ella. The conference took place between the two of them at the back table. Ms. Meyer was seated at the table and called Ella over to her, saying, "Can I see what is going on with you?" Ella was standing and handed her paper into Ms. Meyer's outstretched hands. Ms. Meyer looked through Ella's sheets of paper and started the conference out by saying:

1.	T:	Where where is this beginning?
2.		(Ella remained standing and shuffled through papers and showed her the beginning.)
3.	T:	Here/ Now/ is this in the form of a letter?
4.	Ella:	No/ not yet/
5.	T:	Oh/ these are just the entries?
6.	Ella:	Yeah but I changed them.

In the opening segment, teacher and student were again trying to find a common ground. Ms. Meyer remembered having suggested that Ella turn the piece into a letter and asked her if it were in that form. When Ella responded no, Ms. Meyer asked another question to find out what she had done. In the next sequence, the teacher pointed out how Ella needed an introduction that would be more fitting to a letter after establishing

that there was a conflict between writing a letter (which required second person) and a story (which required the use of either first person or third person).

7. T: Oh OK/ So first you are copying all the entries then you are going to go through this/ and you are going to find/ how to make this because it can't be [*speeds up pace*] "Dear Aunt Dolores/ Me and my Aunt Dolores have always been close/" See what I am saying? (pause) So how are you going to do that?// That that's your challenge/

8. Ella: I have to have a new start (inaudible) something like (inaudible) I changed--

9. T: But you need to have the whole tone change in other words you have to be/ speaking to her as if it is in a letter// See what I am saying?/ So if you were writing all this/ to her/ you wouldn't be saying it like "summers were no different something always happened like when" (reads a part from Ella's text very quickly) You might want to say, "Remember Aunt Dolores when" [*says this slowly*] or/ you know remember when/ or "Boy I laugh when I think about us/" It's kind of like you kind of need to be talking to her as if you would in a letter/

10. Ella: I started doing that/ it was like I was telling it to Serena (laughs)

11. T: Ahh/ yeah/ it's a good idea/ (turns to reprimand class)

In turns 7-11, the teacher smiled frequently and moved her body back and forth in a rhythmic fashion as she was giving Ella ideas. At the point where Ms. Meyer gave specific suggestions about how Ella could start off her piece, teacher and student seemed to connect. Ms. Meyer leaned in toward Ella and Ella sat down, closing the physical gap between them to a distance of about one foot. Ella began to tell the teacher about how she had started to do that and had even tried it out on her friend, Serena. Then Ms. Meyer reprimanded the class briefly, and turned immediately back to her. The two resumed their conference when Ella showed the teacher the last entry.

12. Ella: I'm on the last entry/

13. T: Ok/ so that's when you need to/ kind of/ take all this stuff and decide/ how you can turn this in/

14. Ella: My mother said/ my mother said/ she um like she got her friend to/ like we are making a tape/

15. T: You are going to tape it and send it to her also?/

16. Ella: Yeah/

17. T: That's *wonderful*/ [*draws out word*]

18. Ella: She has a friend that has her voice/ my Aunt Dolores' exact voice/ (laughs) she just talks/ just like her/

19. T: Wow// So/ I am trying to think how you are going to get this done/ So it'll have to be "Dear Aunt Dolores/" right?/

20. Ella: Uh huh//

21. T: That's your challenge/ OK Your challenge is to find where it should start/ OK and how you are going to say it in your voice/

The teacher responded positively to Ella's suggestion that she send a tape along with her letter as evidenced by the teacher's enthusiasm in her voice and her saying "Wow." In this segment there is a much more cooperative element to their interactions. Ella initiated this part of the exchange by offering to show Ms. Meyer the last entry. Additionally, each speaker said about the same amount within a turn. The student offered ideas and the teacher used those ideas. We can see how both speakers incorporated the ideas of the previous speaker. For instance, Ella stressed the word *tape*, which Ms. Meyer then picked up on, emphasizing the same word.

Both seemed to be in a problem-solving mode, as when Ms. Meyer commented, "I'm trying to think how you can get this done." The teacher was scaffolding instruction for her, not by telling Ella what to do, but rather by giving suggestions that would support Ella's idea of using the tape. Their body language demonstrated a kind of synchrony in turns 12-19; both looked at the papers at the same time, looked back at one another simultaneously, looked at the papers again, and then made eye contact. In the next sequence, the teacher seemed to take over again, doing more of the talking and providing specific suggestions.

22. Ella: It's due next week?/

23. T: Yeah/ Now you don't have to include all of this OK/ Not all of this you are going to have to include right?/ You're not going to always say [*speeds up pace for next part*] (reads) "me and my Aunt Dolores have always been close I love all of my aunts but we have a special friendship we love being together considering the fact that we're always getting into trouble like the time/" All right up to here/ This this might be important in the letter?/ So "Dear Aunt Dolores//" What kind of a start? What do you think you need to start this with so the rest of it can come afterwards?// "I've been thinking a lot about you lately/"

24. Ella: Yeah/

25. T: You know/ Maybe that or/ "I find myself very angry Dolores/ because Grandma and Grandpa are coming to visit you and--

26. Ella: They already went--

27. T: "And I am not going/ and I am finding myself thinking a lot about you/ And these these are the things I have been thinking about" You know not/ as *simple* as that/ but that might be a way to get into it/ You know what I am saying?/ That that might be your beginning/ Something like that/ You need to go and work on that OK?/ It's really going to be nice/

As the teacher was talking in turn 25, she leaned in closer to Ella and spread her arms in an open gesture towards Ella. Ella seemed to be in agreement with the teacher's suggestions as evidenced by her looking directly at the teacher and nodding. Both turned at the same time to get Ella's text, then Ms. Meyer handed it to her. At this point, Ella was standing up to leave and added the following:

28. Ella: She is always been telling me "Write me a letter write me a letter instead of running up the phone bill" (laughs)/

29. T: So that could be a good start/ "I decided to listen to you after all Aunt Dolores and kill two birds with one stone--/ satisfy you and write you a letter/ and satisfy my writing project in school by turning my love for you into a letter/" [*pace of this slower, tone is friendly, warm and interested*]

30. (They both giggle.)

31. T: Something like that/ right? So here it goes/ That's kind of *great* right?/ "Dear Aunt Dolores/ I finally decided to listen to you and guess why?/" That could kind of be// a very good beginning/ OK?/ [*friendly, excited lift to her voice*]

32. Ella: OK/

33. T: Things like that/ You think about it/

34. Ella: All right/

The conference seemed to end on a positive note. Ella offered the statement about how her aunt had wanted to communicate with her without adding up the phone bill, and the teacher picked up on the idea immediately, suggesting that the phrase could serve as the introduction to the letter. Synchrony between teacher and student continued as they both laughed about "I finally decided to listen to you." Ms. Meyer was smiling and her voice got a little louder as she made a hand gesture outwards indicating to Ella how she might use the idea of writing the letter. Both teacher and student seemed to enjoy the idea of starting off the letter in that way; Ms. Meyer moved her body back and forth, leaning in and out as she said the words, "Dear Aunt Dolores," while Ella nodded and then returned to her desk. Later on in an informal interview, Ella shared with me that Ms. Meyer had given her the idea to begin her piece, "Dear Aunt Dolores, I finally listened to you." Ella liked this idea and said that she was going to begin her piece that way.

Transformation: How Had Ella Made Sense of the Classroom Discourse?

Ella had a unique way of making sense of the classroom discourse and fitting it into her existing knowledge of writing. A way to understand how Ella made use of the classroom discourse and her previous knowledge about writing is to examine her views about fiction versus nonfiction writing. Ella distinguished between the two types of notebooks she kept and suggested there were different standards for notebook writing and fiction writing. When I asked her to tell me about the qualities of good writing, she expressed her beliefs this way: "If it was like a story and it was fiction, then humor. And if it was nonfiction story--feeling. If it was a notebook entry--feeling."

In this brief statement, Ella not only identified how she thought the two genres differed, but also implied that she knew how to write using both genres.

Her example of what was meant by feelings had much in common with the teacher's emphasis upon description and imagery. In response to what she meant by feeling, Ella said: "I mean, using, not just saying, like if you go to sleep, not just saying 'I went to bed.' But saying like, 'I drifted off into a deep sleep' or something like that."

Ella's use of the word "feeling" had much in common with the teacher's view of the use of "good language." In her example, Ella used the word "drifted" instead of "go to" and used an adjective, "deep" to describe sleep--both examples that Ms. Meyer would have agreed indicated descriptive language. On another occasion, Ella defined feeling as "using detail" and provided an example of using specific words to convey an idea. It appears that Ella had a good grasp of the idea of using description, and, as will be shown in her texts, she was quite capable of using imagery. However, she did not believe it was important to write with feeling in her fiction works. Instead, in her view, fiction should be filled with action and humor. Ella made the further distinction between fiction writing and nonfiction writing in this way:

> You don't always have to write with feeling in detective stories. Sometimes you can, but you don't have to. In some instances you just like, when you really get to the end of the book, that's where the exciting parts happen and you can zip through it actually. But in the beginning, it's kind of, there's no action or anything, you try to put a little humor in it.

Ella seemed to have read enough detective stories to know that plot and action are the salient features, and that you might want to add humor in the beginning to get the reader's attention. Most mystery books do not include a lot of description of setting, character's motives, or detail about how things happened, but are focused on plot, are packed with action, and often employ humor (Lukens, 1990).

"Voice" was another characteristic of Ella's secret fiction writing. I have labelled this characteristic "voice" because it both literally and figuratively captures what Ella was trying to express. When Ella described how she used

her own voice to differentiate among characters, she was using a more literal definition of voice. However, she also employed voice in a more abstract sense in terms of developing her own style where a reader can almost hear the individual writer. Ella expressed some difficulty with writing with feeling, whereas using her voice to indicate different characters' actions was an easier way to express herself and more entertaining for an audience. Ella said,

> It's hard to just come up with something like that [using feeling, detail, description]. . . . Sometimes if you're writing a book, you don't have to write with feeling. But you can just, but if you're reading it out loud to somebody then you can just say it with feeling instead of writing it with feeling. . . . When you read a story out loud you can use different characters' voices. I think that's why I like writing stories so much because when I read them, everybody seemed to like them.

Ella clearly preferred writing fiction to anything else and on several occasions mentioned this. One day she mused, "I wonder when she's [the teacher] going to start letting us write stories." Later on in the interview, she said, "I don't like writing nonfiction but she said we're going to write an autobio- a biography. . . . I'm going to have to go through a lot of things because my mother tells me all these different stories."

One of the reasons Ella preferred writing fiction rather than personal expressive pieces was that she had difficulty remembering incidents that had happened to her in her life. Also, she found that trying to write with feeling slowed her down. She could not just jot down her ideas quickly in her class notebooks, but rather had to take a lot of time to include detail. She thought of nonfiction stories as being about herself and taking a biographical, perhaps even chronological format:

> If you're writing a biography of yourself, then you don't use feeling in the beginning because you don't really remember because that's like when you were little. And then in the end you can use feeling because you just had it recently or last year.

In Ella's mind, writing with feeling (using description) seemed connected with being able to remember and use details from her experience. In her mind, it seemed to be

easier to write what was freshest or most recent in her memory. In talking about writing about herself, she said:

> If it just happened then you can really write about it, but when you're younger, you write a short little piece about it because you don't really know that much about it. . . . When you're writing fiction, you can just write what you want to write. I mean you have to like put a setting and everything, but still you don't have to remember, you don't have to strain your brain to remember.

Ella, then, clearly preferred writing fiction to personal memoirs recorded in her notebook. However, Ella was quite savvy about the classroom context and norms. In fact, Ella said that she thought the teacher "obviously believes in using feeling." Ella did not totally accept her teacher's view of good writing and was able to articulate the view that different people had different standards of good writing. When asked in the exit interview about characteristics of good writing, Ella responded:

> There's a lot of different ways to describe good writing like expressing yourself, using feeling and not just zipping through, but taking some time to do it. All different people have different ways of doing good writing. And all different people have different standards of good writing. Like Ms. Meyer thinks that good writing is feeling. And another person might think you should not just zip through it. Well, a lot of different people have different feelings of writing.

Besides recognizing the teacher's values about good writing, Ella was able to read the teacher's reactions to students' writing quite well. In describing her teacher's responses to students' writing, she offered this insight: "Ms. Meyer, every time she hears something she likes, she's always like, 'Wow!' And then every time she hears something she doesn't like, 'Oh, that's good.' So I want something she's going to go 'Wow' to."

Although Ella was able to figure out what was important to the teacher, her relationship with Ms. Meyer was not without conflict. Ella believed the teacher did like her as a person and valued some of her entries, but knew there were some entries the

teacher did not like. Ella continued to like some of the entries she knew the teacher did not like, but at the same time she felt the need to please the teacher:

> Sometimes when you're with an adult, it makes you feel nervous, especially Ms. Meyer. Every time she looks over my shoulder, I get frightened because she makes me feel nervous sometimes. . . . She's so unpredictable. Sometimes she loves an entry and you'll think, "Oh." And some times she'll hate an entry and you say, "Hey, I like it."

Ella was successful at understanding her teacher's values about good writing and using her teacher's ideas to construct a text in a genre that would be acceptable to her. She acknowledged that the teacher gave her ideas to write about both directly and indirectly, but believed that students, especially, her friend, Serena, provided ideas too.

Conventionalization: What Had Ella Internalized?

From Ella's texts, we can infer what she had internalized from the classroom dialogue. Ella's texts consisted of three different genres: her fiction writing kept in her secret notebook, her classroom notebook, and her project. Each of these contributes something different in understanding Ella's writing and what she had internalized from the classroom dialogue. In her fiction notebook, Ella focused on characters, setting, and plot. She sprinkled much dialogue in the stories to develop her characters. The characters generally encountered some dilemmas that were resolved by the heroics of one of the major characters. The stories are packed with events and filled with humor. Here is an example of the beginning of one of Ella's untitled works from her fiction notebook:

> WAAH!, there was a cry from the bedroom. Does that baby always cry Ella, my dog asked. I was babysitting my cousin Leland for 2 weeks. I went to get him. I brought him into the living room and put him into his playpen. Then it hit me. my dog was talking. I fainted. I woke up 5 minutes later with coffee all over my face. Scooter are dog was gone. I looked up to see my brother Andy starring down at me. Wake up and smell the coffee he said helping me up.[4]

---

[4]No editing of the student's work has been done; it is presented with the original spelling and punctuation.

Even in the short excerpt, we can see how Ella organized her fiction stories with a setting, characters, and events. She combined dialogue and humor in the sentence "Does that baby always cry Ella, my dog asked." This use of dialogue and humor did not characterize her classroom notebook entries.

Although Ella wrote about a variety of topics in her classroom notebook, those entries tended to be more serious and reflective pieces. The entries fell into four categories: (a) pieces about relatives (three entries); (b) entries about news events such as the plight of handicapped people (four entries); (c) reflective pieces such as comparing roses dying to keeping people alive through respirators (five entries); and (d) stories consisting of personal narratives about her own experiences (three entries). Ella's entries indicate a wide range of interests and an ability to reflect deeply about the world and her experience through writing.

Through an examination of Ella's project we can see what Ella had internalized from the classroom discourse. First, the first writing conference Ms. Meyer held with Ella clearly influenced her selection of a topic and the format of her project. Ella did, in fact, write a letter to her Aunt Dolores. Second, we can trace the changes in her texts from the original notebook entry to the project and see the influence of the teacher's image of good text as exemplified through the aspects of description and imagery, the structure of the text, and voice.

Ella's first entry about her Aunt Dolores formed the first vignette in what became a letter to her aunt. Presented below is Ella's entry from her notebook, dated September 16:

> Me and my aunt Dolores have always been close. When we get together we're like Fred and Barney always getting into trouble. like the time we went over to the grocery store. I was about 3 years old. It was winter and there was ice all over the ground. We were walking down the street then suddenly I let go of her hand and started running. I slipped and fell and started laughing. She ran over to help me but she fell down too. We just sat down laughing for awhile. finally we got up. But we fell down again. Although my behind was sore I had a great time.

In this text written early in the year, Ella used little descriptive language. She did include a setting where she wrote, "It was winter and there was ice all over the ground." Ella did not use comparisons, detail, or metaphor. She used a tight narrative structure in which she introduced the relationship with her aunt, set the stage for the event, and told chronologically the story of falling down and laughing. Ella concluded her story with an ending that tied the story together.

In the first draft of the project, we see a great deal of influence from the classroom discourse on both general and specific levels. The writing conference of October 30 clearly influenced Ella's selection of topic. Ella decided to write to her aunt, crediting the teacher with the idea of writing a letter. Even though she had not written any other entries about her aunt in her notebook, Ella suggested that she had been thinking about this topic. She said "I had a lot of entries in my head about my aunt." Ella had an interest in writing about her aunt, and Ms. Meyer encouraged her to develop that interest.

The text itself reflects some of the broader classroom discourse, including the teacher's emphasis upon description and detail, or as Ella would say, "feeling." In the beginning of the draft, Ella drew heavily from her notebook entry about her aunt, and then added two other vignettes. Ella did not just copy the first draft from the notebook, though; she engaged in serious revision as she went along. Her first draft consisted of three vignettes that were separated by a line between each one. The first vignette was the following:

> Me and my Aunt Delores have always been close. I love a lot of my aunts but we have a special friendship. We love being together considering the fact that we're always getting into trouble like the time my grandmother sent us to the grocery store. I was about two or three years old and loved her just as much as I do now (well maybe a little less). It was snowing, ice covered the ground. I had to skip to keep up with her. Snow landed on my nose we laughed as we walked. Suddenly I wriggled out of her grasp and started running. I slipped and fell I sat there for a few seconds than burst out laughing. She ran after me and slipped and fell almost landing on top of me we sat there laughing. Finally we got up well at least we tried to get up but

we fell down again finally sombody came to help us up. She carried me there and back.

In this first part, Ella used more descriptive language and detail than in the original notebook entry. For instance, she added the phrase "snow landed on my nose," perhaps to give the reader a sense of the scene. She substituted "wriggled" for "let go of her hand" because she said "it sounded kind of neat." The second part of the piece, displayed below, shows even more description that Ella had included:

> Summers were no different somthing always happened like when I was 1 1/2 my love for sausage had just begun. I was at my aunt Delores's house it was very hot and sunny. We were eating a breakfast of Sausages and eggs. I noticed that she had gotten more than I did. "I want some owange juice pwease" I said with an innocent look on my face. I watched her go to get it before quickly swiping one of her sausages and putting it onto my plate when she came back I stuffed it into my mouth. She sat the orange juice in front of me. "Fank rou" I said trying to swallow it as fast as I could. "Hey" she said looking angrily at me. "Didn't I have 4 sausages?" "Yes" I said. Well where did it go? she asked. I don't know, I answered. "Than that's where your sausage is in my tummy," I said as I stared at her with my big brown eyes." Well how did it get there? she asked. "What is this 20 questions?" I thought. "What does she expect I'm only a little kid!" She picked me up I closed my eyes expecting somthing bad to happen then I heard her burst out laughing. Grown ups, I thought I just can't figure them out.

In this second vignette, Ella used more descriptive language such as "swiping" and "stuffing." Additionally, she used several adjectives such as "innocent' and "big brown" to describe the look on her face and then her eyes. Ella also brought in a great deal of dialogue which characterized her fiction pieces. Ella's own voice also comes through in the second vignette. She got into her character, herself as a young child--"Owange juice pwease"--and fictionalized the account of the sausage consumption. The last vignette also shows the influence of the classroom dialogue in relation to the use of descriptive language:

> Every morning (when my Aunt Delores lived at my grandmother's house) I used to climb into bed with her. The feeling of her soft skin would feel so good. If I wasn't there I was in my favorite chair. It was an old white chair that I could just squeeze into.

In this final vignette, Ella used several adjectives such as "soft" and "old white" describing the chair. The use of these adjectives suggests that Ella was internalizing certain features of the classroom dialogue and consciously incorporating them into her text.

These three vignettes that Ella had intended to use for her project reflect the emphases of the classroom discourse, but also reflect other voices that Ella drew upon that were not directly connected to the current classroom. Ella had developed a distinctive style in her personal narrative that had some commonalities with her fiction. In the first two vignettes, Ella introduced the topic and then set the particular scene, whether it was winter or summer. Ella's narratives display a setting, character, and plot format, and she has added her own style of humor to the stories. In this version, Ella combined things she valued as an author, such as humor and use of voice, while including the language that the teacher would value, such as use of adjectives and descriptive words.

In the final version of the project, we can see again the influence of the classroom dialogue and specifically hear the voice of the teacher in the revision of the introduction of the letter to her aunt. Here is her final project:

> Dear, Aunt Delores.
>
> I finally decided to listen to you. Instead of running up your or Grandma's phone bill I'm writing you a letter. Remember those stories you used to tell me about when I was little. "I know" "I know." Of course you remember them. Well you're going to hear them again. My way! Here's one you've told me only once, you'll remember it once you hear it. Here it goes: It was snowing, ice covered the ground. We were on are way to the grocery store for Grandma. I had to skip to keep up with you. Snow drifted down onto my nose We giggled as we walked even though I had something else on my mind--"mischief"! I waited for the perfect moment then wriggled out of your grasp. I ran with the wind and slipped and fell and sat there for a few seconds then burst out laughing. Meanwhile you had run after me and slipped and fell, almost landing on top of me. "Yikes" I said as I scrambled to the side. Your face turned red as a beet but then you started laughing. We tried to get up but we could'nt. Finally sombody got us up. You carried me there and back.

Ella had, indeed, used the suggestion of starting out with the line, "I finally decided to listen to you." She also added a lengthier introduction and prepared the reader for the stories by adding, "Well you're going to hear them again. My way!" She kept the descriptive language and the essentials of the story, adding the line about having something else on her mind--mischief. In the revision, Ella kept the events and the imagery, but added features of voice where we can almost hear Ella telling the story aloud. In the second part of the letter, which is separated from the first by a line, Ella inserted a question about whether her aunt could make it to her recital. Here is the second vignette, introduced by "Sound familiar":

> Sound familiar? There's your all-time favorite. Oh by the way could you and a few other family members come to my recital in June? I would really like you to be there and hopefully you'll meet my sister! Well here comes the story. It was a sunny summer day. I was staying at your apartment and we were eating breakfast. I glanced over to your plate and noticed that you had more sausage than I did. "I want some orange juice please" I said. I watched you get the juice. Before I quickly swiped one of your sausages onto my plate, you came back with the juice. 'Hey," you said "how come I only have 3 sausages and you have 4? "I don't know," I answered You didn't say anything else after that. I wondered why.

In the second vignette, Ella retained the beginning of the story, but left out the original ending that included the discussion of the sausage ending up in her tummy. Instead, Ella left the ending much more ambiguous, leaving the interpretation more up to the reader. Here, again, Ella's fictional voice came through: Which ending occurred in real life, which took advantage of artistic license? Ella closed her letter with a poem. Here is her ending:

> I love you and I miss you and I hope I'll see you soon.
> though times were hard
> and we were spread apart
> I've always had faith in
> you cause you were in my heart.
>
> P.S Please write back.
> Love
> Ella
> P.P.S I know you told me to stop growing, but I couldn't help being 5'2 1/2".

In Ella's final project she made use of the dialogue from the classroom, her writing conferences with the teacher, and previous experiences with literature and fiction writing. Her letter shows the direct influence of the teacher in using a letter and in the opening line. The description she used reflects the teacher's value on using detail and interesting language. Additionally, Ella made use of her own voice, which seemed to have been most linked to her fiction writing, to tell the stories within the letter. She appeared to have internalized much of the classroom dialogue, while transforming it to fit within her previous experiences and emerging style.

Conclusions and Implications

Ella did develop intersubjectivity with her teacher during the writing conferences. In the first conference, teacher and student had developed a temporary shared understanding of what the project was. In the second conference, Ella and Ms. Meyer built on their shared understanding by developing the project into a letter to Ella's aunt. These conferences were pivotal in Ella's subsequent texts. She was clearly influenced by these conversations and included the teacher's ideas in her project.

Ella used several features of the classroom dialogue in her texts. She labelled the use of description and imagery as "writing with feeling," but clearly had the concepts, evidenced by her inclusion of these features in her writing and her ability to articulate what she thought the teacher valued. However, she did not just accept or imitate what the teacher had said, but rather she transformed her knowledge of writing to use in a new way in her texts.

Ella was skillful at understanding the classroom norms and the teacher's expectations. She was able to combine those features she thought the teacher valued such as writing about the personal and using description, while developing her own voice. Ella could draw from a variety of her own experiences, including her childhood memories, books she had read, games she played with her friend, and discussions with her mother about the tape. Ella is an example of a student who, in Bakhtin's (1986) term

drew from "multiple voices." She was particularly adept at orchestrating these voices to serve her own purposes within the context of the classroom.

The case of Ella illustrates how a student has appropriated the dialogue from social interaction and transformed it to use in her talk with others and in her own texts. This case has several implications for theory and practice. First, it demonstrates the importance of establishing intersubjectivity between teacher and student (Rommetveit, 1979). Before Ella could use the classroom dialogue or the teacher's ideas in her texts, she had to develop a shared understanding of the task with the teacher. In Ella's case, the teacher scaffolded instruction for her by asking questions and providing suggestions. Although the teacher often dominated the conferences, teacher and student negotiated an understanding of the project. This suggests that teachers and students need to develop a shared understanding of the task to promote internalization.

Second, what Ella internalized was related to the quality and type of interaction and relationships with the teacher. Developing a shared meaning within the momentary, dynamic setting such as a writing conference seemed to be connected to the teacher's and student's existing values and prior relationships. Ella had extensive previous experience in workshop classrooms, especially with fiction writing. Her task was to learn the norms of this classroom to write from personal experience in a new genre. Ella seemed to have gone through an internal negotiation in which she transformed the teacher's expectations to write something meaningful for her, interweaving her fictional voice into her work. This suggests the importance of students' previous experiences with texts, suggesting how students draw from multiple voices (Bakhtin, 1986).

Third, Ella's case provides a concrete example of the Harré (1984) model of internalization within a classroom setting. She appropriated the classroom dialogue focused on imagery and description to use in her own texts, yet transformed that dialogue to reflect her previous experiences and meet the demands of a new task. Her case

supports Vygotsky's (1978) view that internalization is no mere imitation of the social experience, but rather an internal reconstruction of the social plane.

While the study supports several features of social constructivist theory, it raises questions about writing process programs that focus almost exclusively on writing from personal experience as the genre most appropriate for young writers. By focusing on personal experience and not allowing Ella to write fiction for this project, the teacher may have been limiting the student's voice. Although Ms. Meyer believed that personal experience was more compelling than fiction written by young writers, her lack of encouragement could have been quite detrimental to a student who was less confident a writer and less successful in school than Ella. Ella was a writer who had developed her own voice and was able to write in several genres, despite the teacher's lack of encouragement. The teacher's premise that students need to write from personal experience first may need to be reexamined as the result of Ella's case.

To some extent, Ms. Meyer's emphasis upon writing from personal experience was her individual appropriation and transformation of the Teachers College Writing Project; however, the Writing Project strongly influenced her conceptions of writing instruction (McCarthey, 1990). Calkins (1986) never explicitly states that students not be allowed to write fiction, however she suggests that she herself has had difficulty teaching students to write fiction, noting that the quality of children's writing goes down as they often produce pieces that are rehashed television shows. Such writing is both long and difficult to revise. It is conceivable that such a message implicitly discourages teachers from including fiction in their writing curriculum, thus limiting some students access to a genre of writing.

While this study is limited because it focuses on only one student within a brief period, it demonstrates the link between language and learning theorized by social constructivists. Further research could extend this paper by continuing to examine the link

between language and learning within classrooms to provide multiple examples of students' internalization of dialogue within other genres of writing.

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